HARAMBEE FLAME

a publication of the harambee afrikan cultural organization

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THE GOOD NEWS: Stone Soul Picnic Cancelled!

It was recently announced in the OMAHA STAR that the annual Stone Soul Picnic will not be held this year due to insufficient funds. As is well known, the Stone Soul Picnic is held on July 4th.

On the 31st. of May, 1961, South Africa became a republic, ending its colonial status under British rule. Let us suppose it were the case that Africans, living under the rule of the Caucasian-controlled South African government, were to start celebrating that government's achievement of independence from Britain. Let's imagine there being an annual Stone African Picnic in Azania(the name for "South Africa" commonly used by leaders of liberation groups in that country) on May 31st. We Africans in the U.S. would be shaking our heads in disbelief, wondering what possible interests native Africans in Azania could have in celebrating the official birthday of the government which holds them in bondage. We would wonder: "How can <u>those</u> Africans be so stupid?" And we would be justified in such wondering.

But no need to wonder about our Sisters and Brothers in Azania. They are fighting for their freedom. Rather, we should wonder about ourselves. The eyes and ears of some of us are surely feeble and our memories short. We don't recall that our foreparents were brought here as captives and worked here as slaves? We don't recall that the political and economic progress we made during the Reconstruction was erased by Congress, sheriff's departments, the Ku Klux Klan, White Citizens' Councils, and other forces of The American Way?

ANTI-APARTHEID ORGANIZER ADDRESSES PRISONERS

On Sunday, June 16 at 9 a.m., a group of approximately thirty African prisoners met at the religious center to listen to a presentation by Prexy Nesbit on the South African government's apartheid(pronounced "apartate") system. Prexy, a representative of CIDSA(Coalition for Illinois' Divestment from South Africa), was brought here to the Nebraska State Prison through the joint efforts of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization and Buddy Hogan, President of the Omaha chapter of the NAACP.

Following brief remarks by Buddy and an introductory talk on the special connection between the struggles of and conditions facing Africans in Azania(South Africa) and African people in America by Mondo, Brother Nesbit began his address with an explanation of how he came to take an interest in the South Africa question and then went on to describe actual conditions faced by Africans living under apartheid, the partnership(with the South African government) role being

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Also In This Issue:

The Universal Black Writer Press Announces publication of new book, blues at the prison, and regular features: From Other Sources, Poetry, ...

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THE GOOD NEWS...

We are not aware of our present economic condition, our rate of unemployment, our numbers in this nation's prisons and jails, America's continuing interference in the affairs of sovereign nations of Africans and other people of color, American news and commercial media's ongoing portrayal of ourselves and other African people as either sub-humans or cultural clones of middle-class Caucasians? Are we so deaf and blind or just profoundly out of our minds?

When the South African government obtained its independence from Britain, it was not only declaring its independence but declaring its successful conquering and subjugation of the African population within its borders. Likewise, when the U.S. declared its independence from Britain, it was declaring its control over the Native Americans(so-called "indians"). When we celebrate this nation's independence, we are giving our approval to the theft of this land from its indigenous inhabitants and the slaughter of many of their numbers by the same "founding fathers" who found our foreparents in Africa and brought them here to be slaves.

Malcolm X, in speaking once about our participation in this nation's wars, made the comment that we bleed for our oppressor but that, when it is time for us to bleed for ourselves, we have no blood. In the same vein, we can celebrate for our oppressor but, when it is time to celebrate for ourselves, we have no celebrating in us.

We like to celebrate birthdays. Sojourner Truth was born, Nat Turner was born, Harriet Tubman was born, Denmark Vessey was born, Fannie Lou Hamer was born, Malcolm X was born. Many great ones among us were born and gave their lives for us. Yet we remember few of these. Some of us remember Malcolm. But, apparently, commemorating the life and ideas of this man is no longer fashionable in Omaha(and many other places). No parades or dancing or charcoal on the grills for Malcolm or Harriet or Nat or our other great ones. But for the birthday of this nation's declaration of independence--an independence rooted in murder, plunder, and lies--we parade and boogie down.

In conclusion, we ought to have our heads examined.

--Editor

Magic Slim At Prison

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, in cooperation with the Zoo Bar and with funding obtained from the prison's "inmate amusement fund," sponsored a performance at the prison by the Chicago-based blues group, Magic Slim And The Tear Drops. At 2:00 on Sunday, June 23rd., between 150 and 200 prisoners gathered in the gym to receive a potent injection of blues. They got what they came for, as the doctors of the blues - Magic Slim(Morris Holt), Nick Holt, John Primer, and Perdis Wilson - put down about an hour and fifteen minutes' worth of extremely strong medicine.

Midway during the group's final number, Black Gold(Bill Billups), Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization treasurer, approached the microphone clutching a saxophone. A lot of the men did not know what he was going to do with it. They soon found out. Suffice it to say, THE BLOOD GOT OFF! A mean cap to what was one hell of a house call.

ANTI-APARTHED...

played by the U.S. government and American corporations, and the efforts underway to bring an end to apartheid and the return of Azania to African self-rule. A very vigorous and stimulating discussion, in which Brother Nesbit fielded questions, concluded the program. Later in the day, Prexy addressed a group of more than a hundred people at a "Soweto Day" commemoration in Omaha.

FROM OTHER SOURCES

(Ordinarily, in From Other Sources, we provide excerpts from articles, appearing in other publications, that are of an informational nature. In this issue of the FLAME however, we are printing excerpts from articles of an editorial nature. As is the case with the articles of the former type, we try to present material that you will not get from Establishment sources. This digression from the normal From Other Sources format is being undertaken out of our recognition that it is sometimes as effective to know people's views as it is to know the facts or alleged "facts.")

Television: Images & Impact

"While the 'Amos & Andy' show has been viewed as one of the most obvious examples of the results of white cultural ideology, almost nightly American television exhibits examples of the demeaning results of such an ideology. One of the most recent examples of the results of white American cultural ideology is the 'A-Team', with Mr. T. as one of its major characters. The 'A-Team' comes at us weekly in living color. To some extent it could be argued that the 'A-Team' is just one more symbol of the violence that the American public receives in its television programs. Why does Mr. T. stand out so significantly, and why has he become the darling bad boy of American television audiences?

"Mr. T. is projected as super-masculine, loyal, short-tempered, tough, kind, smart, simple, lovable, aggressive, intimidating, flamboyant, savage, and streetwise. His image, from the gold jewelry to the haircut, to his costumes, is deliberately projected as bizarre. He is the latest, but probably not the last, of a long list of 'acceptable' black television personalities. These personalities, whether they be pimp, prostitute, soldier of fortune, or helicopter pilot, are always portrayed as the friendly, loyal, and trustworthy outsider.

"Mr. T. and other such black television personalities, are seen as lovable pets. This is the heart of the white cultural ideology at work. Blacks are cast as inferior and obedient and, even though on the 'right side,' they are not quite capable of making a go of it by themselves. They, like a loyal pet, need the help of the master. As pets they are nice and have human-like characteristics, but they are not quite human. They are stereotypes. Mr. T. and the 'A-Team' is a prime example of this phenomena. The image of Mr. T. is the result of white cultural ideology as filtered through the eyes of white writers. In short, Mr. T. and most black characters on television evolve out of the white mind and white culture, not the black mind or black culture.

"Television fare has no socially redeeming value, while inculcating negative social values in impressionable black youth. Because half of black families are headed by a single parent, many of them suffering from role overload, television often serves the role of custodian and socializer of black children.

"What black children learn from television is that many people, primarily whites, live much better than they do. Television shows such as 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty' illuminate the opulence of America's bourgeoisie. Thus, they acquire the desire for material goods without the means(legitimate means, that is) for achieving them. However, the abundance of crime and violence on television shows teaches them there are illegitimate means for achieving the same goals. Since these same shows do not convey the consequences of criminal behavior, or transmit any sense of morality, black youth reaches the conclusion that it is morally acceptable and effective, to rob and murder people. Certainly, television must share some of the responsibility for the petty thefts, rapes and murders perpetrated by the television generation against the black community.

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Television..

"Other lessons are mediated to blacks by standard television fare. Most television shows depict blacks as being in single parent homes or unmarried, thus providing no model of a stable nuclear family for the viewing audience. When a black married couple is shown, it is the most persistent, and damaging of all black stereotypes: the weak man--strong woman concept. And, these black couples are rarely shown in a loving relationship but tend to exchange insults with each other."

--Excerpted from an article by Robert Staples and Terry Jones which appears on pages 10-20 in the May/June issue of the BLACK SCHOLAR magazine.

Philadelphia Bombing

"I am certain that by now the date, Monday, May 13, 1985, has been seared into the minds and souls of most Black Americans. That was the day Wilson Goode, the Black mayor of the city of Philadelphia, PA instructed, or permitted, his police department, using a state helicopter, to drop a bomb on a house containing Black men, women and children.

"Why have Black leaders not loudly and publicly condemned Mayor Goode in unison? I know that my friend Congressman John Conyers of Detroit has called the bombing "the most violent eviction notice that's ever been given in history" and announced that his House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice will investigate. But, for the most part, Black leaders, as this is being written, have remained silent.

"Let us ponder for a moment this failure of the Black community, our nation's most consistent and persistent conscience, to scream in mass protest over this incident. Is it because we are reluctant to severely criticize any Black mayor publicly for fear that it will make him vulnerable in the future to racially tainted criticism by whites, thus making it easier for a white to replace him in the next election?

"...the election of Black mayors has demonstrated that the potential for genuine unity and the desire for self-determination are alive, at least in the hearts of Blacks. Otherwise, we would not have turned out to vote in the overwhelming numbers required to elect them. Additionally, we have gained in managerial experience, contracts, jobs, self respect and respect from others. Furthermore, it is strategically true that increasing the quantity of Blacks in high office is the surest way to increase the quality of Black representation.

"Nevertheless, these benefits are not sufficient for the price of silence in what happened in Philadelphia. The progress we have made is endangered when any Black in high position has as his or her primary goal the intention of merely proving that he or she can run things as well as the white predecessor, because this usually means running things pretty much as whites did and for the same selfish and inane purpose.

"...surely we have often helped a Black get elected over a white, only to discover that the smooth-talking Black was a stone Tom once in office.

"We can no longer tolerate such betrayals, because they are so destructive of the Black revolutionary spirit and self-confidence that caused the promotion or election in the first place..."

--Excerpted from parts one and two of Congressman Gus Savage's column in the May 30-June 5 and June 6-12 editions of the JACKSON(Mississippi) ADVOCATE

The HARAMBEE FLAME is the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, based at the Nebraska State Prison in Lincoln - Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa(aka David Rice)/Editor

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WRITINGS OF YOUTH AND ELDERLY

Now available from the Universal Black Writer Press is a unique and limited collection of literary work by contemporary African-American youth(from 2 to 20) and senior citizens(60 and over).

Entitled ANCIENT BLACK YOUTH AND ELDERS REBORN - The Poetry, Short Stories, Oral Histories and Deeper Thoughts of African-American Youth and Elders, the anthology contains cover artwork of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune by the famed artist, Charles White, and was made possible by a Brooklyn Arts & Culture Association grant from NYSCA funds.

Through poetry and prose Black children speak with a brilliant innocence of the love, pain, anger and compassion they have experienced in their short years; they speak also in the work of their fantasies, dreams, visions, of the inner-city in its harshness, pain and pleasure and even of nature as it relates to their lives.

Through "Poetworks" the elders speak of their individual histories and their collective histories as a race; through "Wisdom Words" they, in turn, speak of the legacy they wish to leave to the young who share this existence.

In the third section of the anthology, generations are spanned as the work of the elders and children are intermingled in a unique call-and-response literary style. A special section of the volume is dedicated to the oral history of Queen Mother Audley Moore, the Louisiana-born Harlem resident who was crowned Queen Mother of the Asante tribe of Ghana and who, at 86, is known as the "oldest living revolutionary."

A 224-page volume, ANCIENT BLACK YOUTH AND ELDERS REBORN, is illustrated with photographs and artwork by child artists and photographers, as well as artistic works by the talented "Where We At" Black women artists of New York. Numerous proverbs from various African countries introduce each section of the book, accompanied by African graphics by the gifted New Jersey artist, Mel Holston; and a cover design and layout by Bill Waithe of the Bronx, New York.

Edited by Linda Cousins and with an introduction by the acclaimed poet and advocate for children, Mae Jackson, this collection is available from Universal Black Writer Press; P.O. Box 5; Radio City Station; N.Y., N.Y.; 10101-0005(tel.: 718/622-5996).

NEWS ON AFRICA

AIM BULLETIN
Monthly English-language publication of the Mozambique government.
P.O. Box 896
Maputo, Mozambique

AFRICA NEWS
Weekly news and information on all of Africa.
P.O. Box 3851
Durham, N.C.
27702

ZIMBABWE PROJECTS NEWS BULLETIN
Monthly news summary from Zimbabwe.
P.O. Box 4590
Harare, Zimbabwe

FACTS & REPORTS
Twice monthly collection of international newsclippings on southern Africa.
Holland Cnt.
C.Z. Achteburgwal 173
1012 DJ
Amsterdam, Holland

ANGOLA INFORMATION
Twice monthly translation of Angolan newspaper reports.
34 Percy St.
London W1P9FG, England

By the way, a year's FLAME subscription is $6.00. Make money order for that amount payable to "Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization."

POETRY

Soweto

place called 'soweto'
down south africa way
now i been down south
but aint never been to africa
in nunna my days
but ya know ya hear it
on the radio
see it on t.v.
bout the african folks
look like you an me
cuttin up rebellin in the streets
an ya read about em catchin hell
fillin up the jails
bein tortured on the head
all the way down to they feet
an ya stan there in the settlin of the dust
see these black folks treated just like us
ya take a good long look at this sight
africans tryin to gain they rights
an ya caint help but see
but theirs an ours
be the same fight
an ya get a feelin
ya get a notion
that ya need to quit standin still
get yourself into motion
to help them achieve they aims
not only cuz it's just
but
cuz them an us
the same.

Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa